

KENNETH CHAPMAN: MR. Secretary, I was asked by a number of elderly women, men and women in the nutrition program, and I almost forgot that, and I had it written here, and I overlooked it. But they asked me why does the USDA or the United States Government cut the funding for them, the nutrition program, because they are operating on just very little. And with the price of living is going up, and the gas prices makes it difficult for their program. So they asked, wanted me to ask, is it because of the war efforts that they are withholding monies for the war effort?

I have grandsons and granddaughters in Iraq. We don't mind if they need the money to help fight the war, but would they give it back to us after the war is over? They wanted me to ask that question, and I said I would. And I'm glad I remembered it, because they would have certainly confronted me when I got home at the nutrition program.

That's one of the things, and anything that we say here in regards to getting this or that, or funding, grants or whatever to maintain better nutrition, better living standards on the reservations, is it, do we have to have a waiver, black and white for anything to get done, to get any results?

MR. BOST: Give us a second. The first question I am going to answer. The second question I don't understand. Say it again.

KENNETH CHAPMAN: The waivers, do we need waivers in order for anything to "get done"?

MR. BOST: What do you mean, get done?

KENNETH CHAPMAN: Joe brought up --

MR. BOST: You are talking about administration of the Food Stamp Program on Indian reservations, that would require a waiver?

KENNETH CHAPMAN: Would anything that we asked or we talked about here need a waiver?

MR. BOST: Not necessarily. It depends on what it is. Some of the issues you brought up today, I'm sure are going to be discussed in considering reauthorization of this program.

KENNETH CHAPMAN: Before I close, hopefully this reauthorization will come through, and all our efforts here would benefit our tribes and our people at home. And the question about the war efforts, they wanted me to ask that.

MR. BOST: You can take this back to them, that since I've been Under Secretary, there has not been a single decrease in my overall budget for the nutrition programs. When I first became Under Secretary in 2001, my budget was 56 billion dollars. This year it will probably go to 60 billion dollars. It is one of the few programs in all of the federal government that has seen an increase every single year.

USDA TRIBAL LEADER NUTRITION ROUNDTABLE

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KENNETH CHAPMAN: The director, I said, how much money has been decreased in your funding, and she said, I think it was a little over three thousand.

MR. BOST: I can't speak to any decrease in your specific program. Your question was, in the nutrition programs, has there been a decrease to address the issues in Iraq. And the answer to that is categorically, no. I have seen an increase, a significant increase in my budget every year that I've been Under Secretary; every single year for nutrition, exactly, in those 15 nutrition programs. There is no other program outside of the defense in the federal government that I believe that can make that claim. That speaks of the present commitment in terms of these programs. I believe it speaks to how important our programs are.